SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

Annual Report

2011 – 2012

Alberta

Message From the Chair

Since October 2011, I have had the privilege of serving as Chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. As I have ventured along the steep learning curve that has come with this role, I've had the good fortune of being assisted by the many dedicated members of the Council. Their patience and understanding have been appreciated.

This Council plays an important role in support of Alberta's seniors. It serves as a vital and informative link between the Government of Alberta and the day-to-day concerns of seniors in communities across this province. As our society begins to experience the changes that come with an aging population, the knowledge, perspectives and voice of the Council will become more critical for informing the work of the Government of Alberta.

Council's past year was eventful. In addition to providing input on legislation, policies, programs and initiatives that will impact seniors, the Council looked ahead to the future. A new Strategic Plan, developed by members over the past year, will help guide and focus the Council's work for the next several years. This promises to enhance the Council's voice and effectiveness as it continues to work on behalf of Alberta's seniors.

I wish to commend and thank the members of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, for their tireless efforts. Special thanks go to outgoing members Ms. Dawn Parent representing the Central region, and Mr. Harjit Rai representing Calgary and Area, for their valuable contributions.

I also wish to welcome Mrs. Sally Heinen, Ms. Jane Manning, Mrs. Gail Parks, Mr. Simon Lee, and Mrs. Margaret Usherwood, who joined the Council over the past year.

Finally, commendations go to the staff of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta and the department of Alberta Seniors for their continued assistance and support.

Alana DeLong
MLA, Calgary-Bow
Chair

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THE SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

A Vital Voice for Albertans

Alberta's seniors play vital roles in our communities. They enrich our society and our economy, contributing their skills, wisdom and experience. As a growing part of our population, seniors also have unique circumstances and needs that require attention.

Recognizing this, the Government of Alberta established the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta (the "Council").

The mandate of the Council is to review, influence and make recommendations on government policies, legislation, programs and services for older people in Alberta. The Council also encourages public discussion and dialogue on matters relating to seniors in the province.

Vision

To increase the recognition of seniors as one of Alberta's most respected and valuable resources.

Mission

Consult with seniors, seniors' organizations and others to gather information and provide advice to the Minister of Seniors regarding seniors needs.

Values

Integrity, accountability and respect; through these, Council strives to enable Alberta seniors to maintain their dignity and quality of life.

A Unique Role in a Changing Province

The Council plays a unique and important role, helping inform the Government of Alberta as it develops policies, programs and services that impact seniors. Given our province's aging population, the work of the Council has added significance.

As outlined in this report, the average age of our province's population is increasing. Seniors represent a growing proportion of the population, which in the coming years will expand faster than ever before. This will present new opportunities, challenges and expectations for all sectors of society and for all levels of government.

The Council provides a vital source of input and ideas to the provincial government. What makes the Council particularly unique is the way in which it undertakes its work. The Council serves as a direct link between seniors and stakeholder organizations to the Government of Alberta.

Reporting to the Minister of Seniors[1], the Council gathers views and concerns from seniors and seniors' organizations across the province, and identifies and comments on issues of importance to seniors.

This is accomplished through direct engagement, by means of consultation and regular interaction with individual seniors and senior-serving organizations. Members of the Council attend and participate in events across the province, using these opportunities to gather insights and perspectives regarding issues that affect seniors.

Members also raise public awareness about the Council and serve as a mechanism for receiving questions and concerns about issues affecting seniors. They are in regular contact with senior-related and senior-serving organizations in the regions they represent, to encourage input on issues that impact seniors in their communities.

The suggestions and feedback gathered by Council members are used to develop advice on policy approaches, program needs and services for seniors. Where necessary, the Council undertakes further study of particular issues, to ensure its advice is based on available evidence. Once formulated, the Council's advice is provided directly to the Government of Alberta, through the Minister of Seniors.

Information is also provided by the Government of Alberta to the Council. Through a number of mechanisms, Council is informed on government initiatives and programs. One of the mechanisms is that officials with the Ministry of Seniors are regularly invited to attend Council meetings. These officials provide updates to Council members on government initiatives pertinent to seniors, and respond to Council inquiries about government policies, programs and services.

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[1] *For the 2011-12 fiscal year, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta reported through the Minister of Seniors. Effective May 2012, Council reports through the Minister of Health.

Structure of the Council

Established under the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Act, the Council is a body whose members are appointed by the Government of Alberta. The Council is chaired by a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, appointed by the Premier.

Council members represent six geographic regions of the province, and members also represent Alberta's universities and the Alberta Medical Association. Council members serve for a maximum of six years.

Members of the Council in 2011 – 2012 were:

- Ms. Alana DeLong, MLA for Calgary-Bow, Chair
- Mrs. Diana Anderson, North East Region
- Ms. Rosemarie Biggs, Edmonton and Area Region
- Dr. Al Cook, Alberta's Universities
- Dr. John Guy Gokiert, Alberta Medical Association
- Mrs. Sally Heinen, Northwest Region
- Mrs. Beverly Homeniuk, Edmonton and Area Region
- Mr. Simon Lee, Calgary and Area Region
- Mr. Vincent Leung, Calgary and Area Region
- Mrs. Laurie Lyckman, South Region
- Ms. Jane Manning, Northwest Region
- Mrs. Laurie Morris, Edmonton and Area Region
- Ms. Dawn Parent, Central Region
- Mrs. Gail Parks, Central Region
- Mr. Harjit Rai, Calgary and Area Region
- Mrs. Linda Scheibner, Calgary and Area Region
- Mrs. Margaret Usherwood, Calgary and Area Region

To support its mandate, the Council may establish ad hoc committees. The input and information gathered by Council members is provided to the appropriate Council committee for discussion, work and study.

Over the past year, the Council undertook its work through six committees:

- **Accommodations:** The Accommodations Committee assists the Council to better understand and develop policy recommendations related to seniors accommodations. With a view to related programs and services that are already available, the Committee identifies where gaps exist in seniors accommodation, and examines ways to address these issues.
- **Communications:** The Communications Committee assists the Council to better understand and develop policy recommendations related to Government of Alberta communications with seniors. Specifically, the Committee examines communications between the Government of Alberta and seniors about programs and services, and considers how this process can be more effective.
- **Education and Research:** The Education and Research Committee acts as a liaison between the Council and Alberta's post-secondary institutions. The Committee strives to work collaboratively with post-secondary institutions to draw on their knowledge and expertise, and to contribute research information to Council for consideration in the formulation of advice on seniors-related issues.
- **Elder Abuse/Diversity:** The Elder Abuse/Diversity Committee assists the Council to better understand and develop policy advice that reflects particular needs of ethnic and culturally diverse seniors in Alberta. The Committee also examines how the Council can support government initiatives to reduce and address elder abuse, and initiatives that help meet the needs of ethnic and culturally diverse seniors.
- **Health and Wellness:** The Health and Wellness Committee assists the Council to better understand and develop recommendations related to seniors' health and wellness. The Committee examines health-related programs and services that are made available by the Government of Alberta, identifies issues and gaps, and proposes solutions that will help enhance the wellness of seniors.
- **Transportation:** The Transportation Committee assists the Council to better understand and develop policy recommendations related to transportation issues faced by seniors. With a view to available transportation services in the province, the Committee considers how to fill gaps and improve the availability of transportation for seniors.

The Council's advice to government for 2011 – 2012 is discussed later in this report.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL

Strategic Plan and Goals

The Council operates under a three-year Strategic Plan developed by the Council and endorsed by the Minister of Seniors. The Council monitors the plan to engage in relevant discussions, review tasks and priorities, and identify ways to increase Council effectiveness.

To achieve its core business of serving as a direct link between seniors and the government, the Strategic Plan identified four goals for 2011-2014:

- **Goal 1:** To provide timely advice to the Minister on the policies required to meet the needs of seniors based on the information obtained either through proactive or responsive processes.
- **Goal 2:** To identify and understand successful national approaches to seniors' needs and issues and to ascertain where they might be applied to benefit seniors in Alberta.
- **Goal 3:** To improve public awareness of Council.
- **Goal 4:** To improve the quality of work and effectiveness of Council.

Key activities undertaken by the Council over the past year, in support of these four goals, are described below.

Seniors' Week

Each June the Government of Alberta declares the first full week in June as Seniors' Week to celebrate the lives and contributions of Alberta's seniors. The Council coordinated annual Seniors' Week celebrations, which featured the theme of "Vibrant Leaders in the Community".

In 2011, 80 municipalities joined the government in proclaiming June 6 to 12, 2011 as Seniors' Week. Organizations across the province registered 342 events to celebrate the contribution of seniors to Alberta's communities. Registered events were posted on the Seniors' Week website, hosted by the Council, to publicize events to media and community members.

Cardston-Taber-Warner Tour

Once a year, Council members visit a region of Alberta to conduct thorough visits and hold discussions with seniors and service providers.

On June 16, 2011, Council members toured 16 seniors' facilities in the Cardston-Taber-Warner region, including 12 seniors' housing facilities and four seniors' centres. The facilities were located in the communities of Cardston, Magrath, Milk River, Raymond and Taber. At each facility, Council members gathered information from staff and residents.

Staff and residents in most facilities mentioned the quality of accommodation, availability of services, and satisfaction with staff as points of strength. Most noted the availability, on site or from community providers, of a range of health services. The Council was pleased to note that in almost all facilities, meals are prepared on site with a five or six week rotation of meals.

At the same time, Council members noted a number of challenges facing facilities. These included: difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, the need for building improvements, the quality of meals, and cross-government coordination of funding.

The findings of the tour will help to inform the ongoing work of the Council. In addition, the Council has shared its findings with the Minister of Seniors, and with Members of the Legislative Assembly, to help inform the work of the Government of Alberta.

Engaging Albertans

One of the key commitments of Council members is to stay informed on current and potential trends, challenges and innovations in policies, programs and services that impact seniors. To do this, Council members engage Albertans through a range of events and forums.

Major engagement opportunities in 2011 – 2012 included:

- tours of seniors' facilities;
- meetings with individual seniors, seniors' organizations, and service providers who interact with seniors;
- attendance at community events, conferences, forums and symposiums.

In 2011 – 2012, members of the Council participated in 76 events in 28 communities. These events were in addition to the facility visits conducted during the Council's Cardston-Taber-Warner Tour. A list of these events is provided in Appendix B.

Addressing Transportation

The availability of transportation options for seniors continues to be a priority issue across the province, particularly in rural areas. Access to affordable and accessible transportation is essential for seniors to remain socially and economically engaged in their communities. Seniors need to be able to access transportation for groceries, employment, volunteering, social functions, health services, appointments, recreation and other activities. Transportation plays a key role in helping seniors remain active and engaged, and in helping prevent social isolation of seniors.

This past year, Council received informative presentations on seniors' transportation issues and medically-at-risk drivers from Dr. Bonnie Dobbs of the University of Alberta and Mitch Fuhr of Alberta Transportation. Members of Council also participated on a committee with the Alberta Motor Association and the Northern Alberta Development Council, which is pursuing an initiative on Developing Transportation Strategies for Seniors.

Working with Government

The Council regularly interacts with officials in the Ministry of Seniors. This working relationship enables the Council to provide government officials with input and perspectives to inform the day-to-day work of government and the development of policy initiatives that impact the lives of seniors.

Over the past year, the Council has helped inform a number of government actions and initiatives, including:

- Continued implementation of policies, programs and services guided by the *Aging Population Policy Framework*;
- Development of materials to raise awareness about financial abuse of seniors and to help seniors guard against financial abuse;
- Insights and feedback on continuing care initiatives;
- Development of new elder abuse training materials for service providers and stakeholders;
- Legislation to establish a new Seniors Property Tax Deferral program in Alberta to enable seniors to use their home equity to stay in their homes longer; and
- Development of a series of information workshops, along with tools and resources, to support the creation of more age-friendly communities in Alberta.

Strategic Planning to Guide the Future

A major undertaking of the Council this past year was to refresh its three-year Strategic Plan. This afforded the Council an opportunity to take stock of its work, and to look at a go-forward approach that will more closely align the Council's activities with its mandate and purpose, as well as the priorities of seniors and stakeholders

With the benefit of this information, Council members undertook deliberations and hands-on work to craft a new Strategic Plan for 2012-2015. This new plan will guide and focus the work of the Council, helping the Council identify areas where its input and advice can best help the province address current and emerging needs of seniors. The plan will also help the Council augment its effectiveness in informing Albertans and fulfilling its mandate.

The new Strategic Plan is structured around three core goals:

- **Goal One:** Strengthen the ability of Council members to communicate effectively and consistently with seniors and seniors' organizations.
- **Goal Two:** Achieve greater alignment and cohesion in the working relationship between the Council and the Seniors Ministry.
- **Goal Three:** Develop opportunities for the Council to become better informed of effective approaches intended to meet the emerging needs of seniors.

KEY ISSUES

In the course of its work and its ongoing consultations with seniors and stakeholder organizations, the Council identifies key issues and trends in Alberta that relate to seniors. These issues and trends have implications for seniors and their quality of life, and for the Government of Alberta as it develops and delivers policies, programs and services that touch the lives of seniors.

Over the past year, the Council has noted several emerging or ongoing issues that stand to impact Alberta's seniors. While the Council is not providing specific advice on these matters at this time, it is important to bring attention to them for the benefit of decision-makers in the Government of Alberta.

Preparing for an Aging Population

On January 1, 2011, the first member of the baby boom generation reached 65 years of age, and every 14 minutes another Albertan does the same. A long-anticipated demographic shift is beginning, led by the very large population cohort known as the baby boomers.

While it is true that age is merely a number, the consequences of aging are profound. As a society, we are generally becoming healthier, more educated, longer lived, and better off financially. However, there will always be a percentage of our senior population who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, or who experience health challenges. Even if this percentage remains unchanged, their total numbers will grow over time because the number of seniors overall is steadily increasing.

Changing demographics translate into changing needs across the province. For the Government of Alberta, it means evolving needs for health services and supports, income supports, infrastructure, transportation and other areas where government has a role in providing programs, services and supports. Our province needs to meet the shifting needs of seniors in effective, affordable and sustainable ways.

The Council is encouraged by the Government of Alberta's development of the *Aging Population Policy Framework*, which recognizes these shifts and is intended to guide government in the continued development of policies, programs and services. It is essential that the Government of Alberta remains committed to this effort, so that our province is adequately preparing for an aging population.

Aging in the Right Place

The Government of Alberta has often referred to the concept of "aging in the right place" as a philosophy it intends to follow when making decisions about policies, programs and services for an aging population. Based on what seniors and seniors' organizations are telling Council members, it seems that Albertans generally support this philosophy. Most Albertans would like to remain in their own homes and in their own communities for long as possible.

However, bringing about an Alberta where people can "age in the right place" will not be achieved by talk alone. It requires action.

One of the most important actions is ensuring that Albertans have access to a variety of options, so that they can age in the place they feel is right for their circumstances. The move to create more designated supportive living spaces in the province is encouraging. However, seniors are telling the Council that more lodge spaces are also required. Lodges play a key role in the spectrum of continuing care for Albertans who wish to live in a home-like setting but require access to personal services.

Alberta's seniors are also expressing a need for more long term care spaces in their communities. With the increasing number of seniors, and because seniors are living longer, there is a growing number of seniors with complex health needs. An appropriate number of long-term care spaces is essential to support people with complex health needs, including dementia.

It is also important that Albertans have access to services to enable them to remain in their homes for as long as practicable. This includes adequate access to home care, which may be especially critical in smaller communities where continuing care options may be limited. It also includes home support services such as house cleaning, meal preparation and home maintenance.

Public awareness is also an important component for making "aging in place" a reality. The concept needs to be promoted to the public, so that Albertans understand their options and responsibilities, and make efforts to plan ahead. For example, Albertans should be encouraged to think about where they will live, what kind of needs they might have, and how they plan to access services.

Addressing Audit Concerns in Continuing Care Facilities

In past meetings, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta has brought forward concerns raised by continuing care facilities about facility audits. While facilities appreciate the importance of audits, they have found that audit processes can be redundant and time consuming. A great number of residents in continuing care facilities are seniors. Time spent on paperwork for audits takes staff away from providing quality care to seniors.

The Council has been pleased to see the Government of Alberta make progress on this issue. Alberta Seniors has been participating, along with Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Health Services, on a Continuing Care Standards Monitoring Collaborative. The purpose of the Collaborative is to develop and implement standardized audit processes to help streamline and better coordinate audits.

In addition, in March 2011, the Minister of Seniors and the Minister of Health and Wellness asked their Parliamentary Assistants to consult with operators of continuing care facilities, and to make recommendations on reducing the administrative burden of inspection and audit processes. The Council hopes the results of these efforts will result in meaningful change that enables continuing care facilities to focus their time and attention where it is required most: providing quality care for seniors.

Support to Caregivers

The Council is increasingly hearing from Alberta seniors and their families about the pressures faced by caregivers. Growing numbers of adults in Alberta are acting as informal caregivers to senior family members and friends. With people living longer, and the baby boom generation beginning to enter their senior years, situations of seniors providing care to other seniors are also becoming more commonplace.

Being an informal caregiver often means sacrifices and stress. These can be financial (out-of-pocket expenses and time away from work), personal (less time available for other family members and personal pursuits), physical and emotional. Being an informal caregiver is commendable, and the actions of caregivers should be recognized and supported.

It also makes good policy sense. A burned out caregiver can pose health and safety risks to the both the caregiver and the senior receiving care. In addition, the value of informal caregiving represents millions of dollars. Informal caregivers often support seniors to remain in their own homes as long as possible, which avoids them being moved to a continuing care facility sooner than they would without this support.

Ideally, informal caregivers should have access to a variety of resources and supports. For example:

- in-home respite services to enable caregivers to run errands or get some rest;
- wide availability of day programs for seniors to provide alternatives for seniors and caregivers on an as-needed basis;
- tax credits or other mechanisms to assist caregivers with expenses or lost income due to time away from work;
- information resources that caregivers can draw on for common questions and concerns; and
- counselling, education, training and other services to help caregivers manage stress, maintain their physical and emotional health, and avoid burnout.
- As a growing proportion of Alberta's population enters its senior years, informal caregiving will take on greater prominence. Responding to this trend now will have significant benefits in the years ahead.

Medically-at-Risk Driving and Alternate Transportation

Transportation is a challenging issue facing communities across Alberta, especially rural communities. The Council has previously discussed the importance of having effective, affordable and accessible transportation options in communities. Seniors' health and wellness, their ability to participate in community life, and their ability to age in the right place, all depend on transportation.

Not every senior will experience medical complications that compromise their ability to drive. However, all aging drivers and their families need to be aware of issues around medically-at-risk driving so that Albertans, including seniors, are not placed in situations where their health, safety and lives are in jeopardy. Given that transportation alternatives may be very limited in some communities, many seniors find driving to be critical. This raises concerns about medically-at-risk driving.

Alberta seniors, their families, and Alberta's health professionals would benefit from informational resources and enhanced awareness about medically-at-risk driving, and access to best practice approaches. This way, the right conversations can be had at the right time, with increased safety for all.

Person-Centred Health Care

Not surprisingly, health remains one of the most important subjects for seniors. The Council hears many views about the accessibility and affordability of health services, treatments, supplies and prescriptions. One issue that is often common to these concerns is differences in coverage provided by Alberta's publicly-funded health system.

In an environment where people are living longer and seniors are growing in number, it is important that our publicly-funded health system meets Albertans' needs. In recent years, the Government of Alberta has indicated its desire for a health system that delivers person-centred care. This means delivering care based on the needs of the person, rather than having people go from place to place to access service and support.

From the Council's perspective, a consideration in moving to person-centred health care is that coverage under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan should be consistent. Where a senior receives health services should be irrelevant. What is covered under the publicly-funded health system should remain the same, no matter where in the province the senior receives those services. The health services covered in a hospital or long term care facility, for instance, should also be covered if they are provided in an assisted living or home setting.

This is especially true if the Government of Alberta wants Albertans to be able to age in the right place. Aging in the right place means that Albertans will increasingly be receiving health services in their homes and in community settings.

Reintroducing Chiropractic Services for Seniors

In its 2009-2010 Annual Report, the Council highlighted concerns about the decision to "de-list" chiropractic services from coverage under the Alberta Health Care insurance Plan. Chiropractic services play an important role for many seniors in helping to stay mobile and to manage pain. Without these services, seniors may seek more prescriptions for pain medication, which can have side effects that might result in falls, accidents, and injuries. Council encouraged the Minister of Seniors to discuss this issue with the Minister of Health and Wellness.

As part of Budget 2012, the Government of Alberta announced plans to re-introduce coverage of chiropractic services for seniors. This will help defray the costs faced by seniors and provide more consistent access amongst the senior population as they access chiropractic services. This supports seniors to stay active, healthy and independent.

Availability of Health Professionals

The availability of health professionals remains a key concern for seniors in many communities, especially rural and remote communities. Many seniors indicate difficulty accessing a general physician. In addition, accessing a specialist can take a lot of time and often requires travel to a larger urban centre.

More work needs to be done to enhance the availability of health professionals in Alberta communities. This does not necessarily mean that every community requires more general physicians. Having access to nurse practitioners, or being able to access more services from pharmacists, therapists etc., would be helpful for many seniors.

During the Cardston-Taber-Warner Tour, the Council visited a continuing care facility that utilized distance learning from Norquest College to train health professionals locally. This approach appeared to be effective and cost-effective in enhancing local residents' access to health professionals. The Government of Alberta could look at expanding on this approach to improve access to health professionals in other communities across the province.

Progress on the 21-Day Menu

An issue that has raised concerns among many seniors in long term care centres is Alberta Health Services' implementation of a standard 21-day menu in facilities it administers or contracts with. Seniors' concerns have related to the quality of food under this menu, including the use of processed foods and lack of fresh items, local produce and ethnic foods.

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta has highlighted attention to this issue on several occasions, including in the 2010-11 Annual Report. Council has emphasized to the Government of Alberta that, for seniors living in these facilities, the quality of food is central to their quality of life.

In November 2010, in response to a review commissioned by Alberta Health Services, facilities were issued a directive, "10 Ways to Immediately Respond to Local Meal Preferences", focused on improving the quality of food in facilities. While there continues to be some challenges with respect to menus and meals, Council has since noted that some flexibility in the 21-day menu has been introduced. This has resulted in increased ability among facilities to provide ethnic and special event menus. However, Council continues to hear concerns about food quality and encourages government to continue efforts to improve the quality of food in these facilities, including discontinuing the precooked option entirely.

THE COUNCIL'S ADVICE

The advice presented by the Council to the Minister of Seniors is presented below.

Communications Between Service Providers and Seniors

Alberta has grown remarkably, particularly over the past decade. Our province has welcomed new residents from across Canada and around the world, contributing to our diversity. Many have moved to Alberta to take advantage of employment and economic opportunities. As a result, our society includes people from a range of different backgrounds, cultures and languages.

As a consequence of this diversity, seniors and services providers may not always speak the same first language or come from the same background. This can lead to communications challenges for both the service provider and the senior, which can be compounded by hearing difficulties that can come with age.

The safety, security, health and well-being of seniors depends on clear communication. With this in mind, the Council advises that every effort be made to ensure seniors and seniors' service providers clearly communicate and understand what each other are saying.

Minimum Disposable Income

Under current policy, the Alberta Seniors Benefit (ASB) program calculates benefits to ensure that seniors in long term care who receive ASB have a minimum of $265.00 in disposable income each month after paying their accommodation fees, for items such as laundry, haircuts, clothing, and toiletries.

While this minimum monthly disposable income for seniors in long-term care is among the highest in Canada, information gathered by Council suggests there are challenges.

Council has received feedback that some residents in long term care facilities find $265 is inadequate to meet basic needs such as toiletries, personal laundry, phone and cable television. In addition, there is inequity in the present system, depending on the type of facility in which a senior resides. Those living in designated supportive living facilities pay their medication costs as well as other basic necessities from the $265 minimum monthly disposable income. Additionally, there are many seniors living in other types of housing facilities who are not eligible for the $265 minimum disposable income because they do not reside in long term care facilities.

For seniors, an inadequate disposable income presents risks. One major risk may be that seniors lack sufficient funds to pay for their medications if they are not residing in a long term care facility. Consequently, they may choose not to purchase medication, compromising their health and well-being.

The Council notes that the $265 amount has not been adjusted in a number of years. The Council believes that all seniors should have sufficient disposable income to meet their basic needs, regardless of their housing situation.

The Council encourages the Government of Alberta to undertake a review of the disposable income policy, to ensure that all seniors living in seniors' housing facilities have adequate income remaining to meet their basic needs after their accommodation fees have been paid.

Drug Wastage

Prescribed medications are now commonplace in the treatment and management of many health conditions. As seniors age and their health changes, health professionals may prescribe medications for long-term use, to deal with prolonged illness or manage chronic conditions.

When a new medication is prescribed for longer-term use, seniors often purchase an initial three-month supply so as to reduce co-payments and dispensing fees. In some cases, this can lead to drug wastage. Some seniors will stop using the medication before the three-month supply is consumed; it may have caused side effects or did not agree with them. Therefore, the unused portion of the prescription is wasted. This translates into financial costs for both seniors and government.

To reduce drug wastage, the Council believes that seniors should have the option of purchasing an initial two-week supply, at a total cost (including dispensing fee) that is prorated based on a three-month supply. The senior can then have the option of purchasing the balance of the three-month supply later on, without having to pay their co-pay portion again or paying larger dispensing fees than they otherwise would. This would enable seniors to "test drive" their medications without financial penalty, leading to less wastage and lower health risks.

Transfers to Assisted Living and Financial Benefits

A situation causing financial stress for some seniors is transfers between care settings. Specifically, seniors who are transferred from acute care or long term care settings to assisted living settings sometimes experience delays in funding.

There are occasions when a senior is, from an administrative standpoint, caught between the old setting and the assisted living setting when the senior moves. This can delay increases to the senior's financial benefits (such as the Alberta Seniors Benefit and Special Needs Assistance for Seniors) that the senior now requires as a result of moving to assisted living.

In the meantime, the senior faces more upfront costs due to differences in health service coverage between settings. Once they are processed, the adjusted benefits are retroactive to the date of the senior's move, ensuring the senior is not left out-of-pocket. However, the period of delay can be financially stressful for low-income seniors, and can lead to seniors choosing to go without essential medications or living needs.

The Council advises the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services to review their reporting systems, and make necessary enhancements to minimize the delay of financial benefits to seniors who are moved from long term care or acute care settings to designated assisted living facilities.

In April 2011, the Government of Alberta launched an information portal which allows operators to inform the government immediately when a senior is placed into a long-term care (LTC) or designated supportive living (DSL) facility. This, in turn, allows for faster processing and provision of financial assistance from the Alberta Seniors Benefit and Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped programs to eligible Albertans. Currently, almost 75 per cent of about 300 LTC and DSL facilities are using this system. The government is continuing to work with the remaining 25 per cent of operators to get them set up on this system as well.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The year 2011 – 2012 was an eventful one for the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta. In addition to its ongoing work of engaging seniors, examining issues and advising government, the Council did some internal homework.

Next year, the Council will be guided by its new Strategic Plan, which promises to continue to focus the work of Council and enhance its effectiveness. Council members are excited at the prospect of achieving closer alignment with the Government of Alberta, and informing the most timely issues and debates of the day.

The Council's new Strategic Plan will enable the Council to better inform the Government of Alberta on issues relating to seniors. It will also better position Council members to inform and engage Albertans in communities across the province, enabling the Council to go further in fulfilling its mandate.

The Council wishes to thank all of the individuals who have informed its work and deliberations over the past year, and the organizations that have graciously welcomed Council members at their facilities and events.

It is through these grassroots connections that the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta remains a unique, effective and meaningful voice — for seniors and by seniors.

APPENDIX A

Biographies: Members of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta

Ms. Alana DeLong

Chair, Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta and MLA, Calgary-Bow

Alana DeLong was elected to her fourth term on April 23, 2012, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly representing the Constituency of Calgary-Bow. She was appointed to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, the Standing Committee on Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on May 24, 2012. She was also appointed to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities on May 28, 2012.

During her third term, Ms. DeLong served as parliamentary assistant for Seniors and chaired the Seniors Advisory Council.

Alana continues to Chair the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta and is the new Chair of the Pacific North West Economic Region Committee. Previously she co-chaired the 2010 PNWER Calgary Summit Host Committee.

Born in Nelson, British Columbia, Ms. Alana DeLong obtained her bachelor of science (honours) in mathematics with a minor in theatre from the University of British Columbia. She then moved to Calgary, where she attended courses at the University of Calgary, in the master's in computer science program.

Ms. DeLong has more than 20 years of experience in the field of information technology and has worked for many leading high-tech computer firms in Calgary, serving as President of Sterlingrock Systems Incorporated. She was also the first female computer mainframe salesman with Sperry Univac and the first female marketing manager with Canadian General Electric.

An active member of her community, some of Ms. DeLong's past contributions have been as President of Tuesday Nooners Toastmasters and as a singer with the Calgary Opera Chorus. She has campaigned extensively for the Red Cross Society, the Cancer Fund, the Heart and Stroke Fund, Flowers of Hope, and various municipal, national and provincial elections. She hosted a TV ski program and has been an actress with Theatre Calgary.

For more than 30 years, Ms. DeLong has called the community of Bowness home where she resides in a log home that she built for her family. Alana enjoys the outdoors and has hiked the province's mountains and canoed most of the rivers in southern Alberta.

Alana DeLong is married to Dennis Beck. Together they have two grown children, Samantha and James.

Mrs. Diana Anderson

North East Region

Diana Anderson has spent most of her career working to improve the quality of life for seniors and to dispel myths about aging. Mrs. Anderson was the president of the Alberta Council on Aging and chaired the policy advisory and health committees. She has also served on the Lakeland Health Authority board and on the steering committee to implement accommodation standards for supportive living facilities.

Mrs. Anderson has developed outreach programs for long-term care residents, worked with pastoral care groups and taught post-graduate courses in gerontology. She currently leads a program that brings youth and seniors together. Her community service was recognized with the awarding of an Alberta Centennial Medal.

Mrs. Anderson became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Ms. Rosemarie Biggs

Edmonton and Area Region

Rosemarie Biggs was a community pharmacist when she started a home visit program for seniors. She used her prescription deliveries as an opportunity to discuss medications with seniors and how to take them properly.

Her community and professional involvement includes serving as President of the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association in 1996. She was re-elected as the association's president in 1998. Ms. Biggs has spoken nationally and internationally, and has received several awards in recognition of her work. The awards include the Canadian Pharmacists' Association's Pharmacist Care of Older Persons Award and the Pride of Strathcona Award for her dedication to patients' well-being.

Ms. Biggs became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Dr. Al Cook

Alberta's Universities

Dr. Cook specializes in assistive device technology and is currently researching the use of robots to develop and reveal cognitive and language abilities in children who have severe disabilities. He received his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering at the University of Colorado and his masters in Bioengineering as well as his doctorate from the University of Wyoming.

In addition to being associated with the I CAN Centre at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Dr. Cook has served as Co-Director of the Assistive Device Centre at California State University.

Dr. Cook is a Professor in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of Alberta. He was Dean of Rehabilitation Medicine from 1994-2007. Dr. Cook serves on the Board for the institute for Reconstructive Sciences in Medicine (iRSM) and the steering committee for Institute for Continuing Care Education and Research (ICCER).

Dr. Cook became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2008.

Dr. John Guy Gokiert

Alberta Medical Association

Dr. Gokiert was born in southern Manitoba and moved to the Edmonton area with his family where he attended the University of Alberta. After medical school, he moved to Westlock, Alberta with his wife, Susan, where they had three children and where Dr. Gokiert ran a general practice until his retirement in 2009. During his career, Dr. Gokiert worked with the Alberta Medical Association (President in 1994-1995), the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Protective Association.

Dr. Gokiert has always been interested in all aspects of medicine, particularly the care of the elderly. He was involved as President of the Medical Staff at both the acute care hospital and a long term care facility in Westlock, as well as a Medical Examiner for the province. Dr. Gokiert was also a teacher for both Medical Students and Family Medicine residents at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Gokiert became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Mrs. Sally Heinen

Northwest Region

Sally Heinen is enthusiastic about promoting seniors to be active participants in all aspects of their communities. She has chaired and volunteered on the Community Services Board, which supported a Home Support Program for seniors, enabling them to live in their own homes as long as possible.

Mrs. Heinen's love of children led her to spend the last twenty years in the school system, where she spent many hours volunteering with students on special projects or with minor sports, like hockey. She also chaired and volunteered with many Parent Advisory Councils – sometimes three at a time.

Mrs. Heinen has developed an immense passion for seniors, mostly from her family members. She grew up watching her grandparents manoeuvre through retirement. And now, her parents are in their eighties and are still working and loving it. All of this has helped Mrs. Heinen to realize her belief that seniors continue to have an important role in our society.

Mrs. Heinen became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

Mrs. Beverly Homeniuk

Vegreville, Edmonton and Area Region

Beverly Homeniuk has served on several boards, committees and organizations at district, regional and provincial levels in the Vegreville region.

She has also been an outreach worker with the Vegreville Health Unit, where she developed and implemented visiting programs for the elderly and homebound. Most recently, she served in an administrative position with the provincial government where a large part of her role involved providing support and assistance to seniors.

In 1998, Mrs. Homeniuk was awarded the Northeast 4-H Region Award of Distinction for volunteer leadership, and her family received the Edmonton Northlands/Alberta Motor Association Farm Family Award in 2001.

Mrs. Homeniuk became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

Mr. Simon Lee

Calgary and Area Region

Simon Lee is passionate about serving seniors. Mr. Lee's desire to contribute to the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta stems from his deep respect for seniors.

Mr. Lee is a Chartered Accountant, and has experience in the housing and seniors' industry as the Finance Manager of the Calgary Housing Company, and previous Chief Administrative Officer of MCF Housing for Seniors. Mr. Lee has also served on the Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association board, which is the leading association for advocating seniors housing in Alberta.

Mr. Lee became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

Mr. Vincent Leung

Calgary and Area Region

Vincent W. Leung is a Chartered Accountant and a passionate leader about seniors care and wellness in his community. Mr. Leung was instrumental in the founding the Wing Kei Care Centre in Calgary—the first Chinese nursing home to provide culturally and dietary appropriate programming to its residents. Since the beginning of its operations in 2005, the Wing Kei Care Centre has won acclaims in meeting provincial and national standards.

During Mr. Leung's term as a member of the Senate at the University of Calgary, he participated actively with local and international communities. Mr. Leung was the recipient of the Alberta Centennial Award in 2005 and the International Achievement Award from the University of Calgary in 2006.

Mr. Leung became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Mrs. Laurie Lyckman

South Region

Laurie Lyckman is very familiar with issues important to seniors, their caregivers and families. Working in the lodge setting for over 20 years, she is keenly interested in how best to improve the quality of life of seniors and help them understand the options and opportunities available to them.

Mrs. Lyckman is now a Reiki Master and works with Holistic Healing. She volunteers with Victim Services and with several committees in her community. In 2005, Mrs. Lyckman received an Alberta Centennial Medal for her contributions to the community.

Mrs. Lyckman became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2006.

Ms. Jane Manning

Northwest Region

Jane Manning is a Registered Nurse and President of the Wapiti Community Dorm Society, which manages the Rotary House Emergency Shelter in Grande Prairie and a member of the Grande Prairie and Area United Way Board.

Ms. Manning is also the Chair of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Northwest Region Community Board, Vice-Chair of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, and a member of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, Continuing Competence Committee.

Until she retired in 2007, Ms. Manning also held the position of Vice-President of Regional Health Services for the Peace Country Health Region.

Ms. Manning became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

Ms. Laurie Morris

Edmonton and Area Region

Laurie Morris is a clinical social worker employed at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton, and works primarily in the area of geriatrics. She has extensive contact with seniors, their caregivers and families. An area of interest and clinical focus for Laurie is dementia and capacity assessment.

Over the years, Ms. Morris has been involved, in a volunteer capacity, with her professional association, with community social service agencies/organizations, with school parent advisory councils, and with sports/recreation events and associations.

Ms. Morris became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2009.

Mrs. Gail Parks

Central Region

Gail Parks is proud to serve seniors, through her work, on the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta.

For the past 40 years Mrs. Parks has been a voice for seniors through her work and volunteer efforts in politics. Working as a constituency assistant for provincial and federal members led her to seek her own elected position on the City of Red Deer City Council. Mrs. Parks has served in municipal government for 12 years. She began this journey as a volunteer in campaign offices, then moved to campaign manager. All her roles have been very rewarding, and the most important of all was learning to speak for those who could not speak for themselves.

Mrs. Parks has been a canvasser for the Canadian Diabetes Association, Heart & Stroke Foundation & Canadian Cancer Society for a number of years. This volunteer work is important to her as these diseases have touched her family.

Mrs. Parks sees that many of the issues facing today's seniors were the same issues her parents faced. With an abiding respect for a resource that is valuable and treasured, she is pleased to have this opportunity to be involved in helping seniors.

Mrs. Parks became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

Mrs. Linda Scheibner

Calgary and Area Region

Linda Scheibner has a genuine respect for, and interest in, the issues that arise for seniors in the province, and she looks forward to being able to provide another voice for Alberta's rural and urban senior's populations. Mrs. Scheibner has served on many different boards and committees within the hamlet of Gem and the County of Newell, such as: Gem FCSS, the Gem library board, 4H, Newell Further Education Council and the Gem Community Association.

Mrs. Scheibner completed a Community and Youth Leadership program at Lethbridge College, and is very active in her community. She and her husband own and operate a farm and feedlot, where she enjoys the benefits and challenges that are associated with farming and the rural way of life.

Mrs. Scheibner became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.

Mrs. Margaret Usherwood

Calgary and Area Region

Margaret Usherwood began her career as a Registered Nurse, specializing in Intensive Care at a major urban hospital. She completed studies in Marketing at Ryerson University in Toronto while working as a clinical researcher in the pharmaceutical industry. Mrs. Usherwood has held the position of Senior Product Manager for medical capital equipment companies, and has also been published in medical journals.

Mrs. Usherwood has a number of years of experience working with seniors in the province, in home care and seniors housing. As a partner in U2 Consulting, she provided market research and consulting for elder service and seniors housing markets. Mrs. Usherwood also has a Gerontology Certificate from the University of Calgary.

Mrs. Usherwood is a Client Service Manager at Carewest, and volunteers her time on many boards that focus on seniors, including the Seniors Housing Forum and the Alberta Association for Gerontology.

Mrs. Usherwood became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

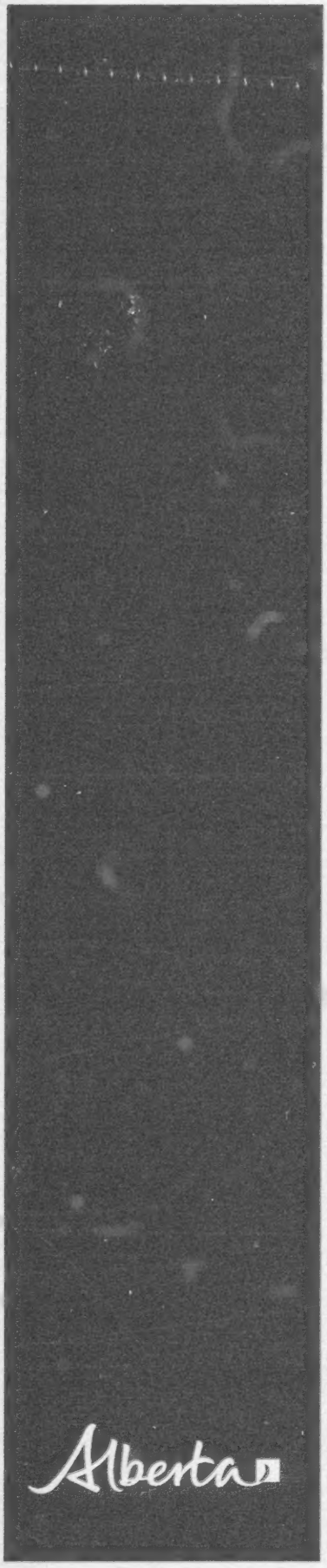
APPENDIX B

The following table has details of Council activities for 2011 – 2012.

Location	Facility/ Organization	Reason for Visit
Ashmont	Alberta Health Services	Event
Athabasca	Alberta Council on Aging Northeast region	Meeting
Bassano	Town of Bassano, Bassano FCSS, Newell Further Education	Event
	Playfair Lodge	Facility Tour
	Playfair Lodge and Bassano FCSS	Facility Event
Brooks	Newbrook Lodge	Facility Meeting
	Sunrise Garden	Facility Tour
	Newbrook Lodge	Meeting
	Prairie Pioneer Club	Meeting
	Brooks and District Seniors Outreach Society	Meeting
Bruderheim	Bruderheim Seniors Centre	Senior Service Information Session
Calgary	Monterey Place	Facility tour
	Confederation Park 55+ Seniors Activity Centre	Seniors' forum
	Manor Village of Rocky Ridge	Facility Tour
	Kerby Centre	Facility Event
	Newport Harbour Care Centre	Facility Tour
	Harbours of Newport Retirement Residence	Facility Tour
	Confederation Park Lodge	Facility Tour
	Confederation Park 55+ Activity Centre	Facility Tour
	Golden Age Club and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society	Event
	Aspen Lodge	Facility Tour
	Bow Valley Lodge	Facility Tour
	Valleyview Lodge	Facility Tour
	Whitehorn Village Retirement Community	Facility Tour
	Watergrove Park	Meeting
	Scenic Acres Retirement	Facility Tour
	Arbour Lake	Facility Tour
	Seniors Services Conference	Conference
	Lindsay Blackett, MLA for Calgary Northwest	Meeting
Coalhurst	Coalhurst Seniors Centre	Event
Cold Lake	Seniors' Coalition Cold Lake	Meeting
Crowsnest Pass	Crowsnest Pass Seniors	Meeting
Debolt	Debolt Pioneer Centre	Meeting — March 21 Jane

Location	Facility/ Organization	Reason for Visit
Edmonton	Office of the Public Guardian	Workshop
	Westend Seniors Activity Centre	Roundtable discussion
	Millwoods Seniors Association	Meeting
	Elder Abuse Awareness Network	Conference
	Millwoods Seniors Association	Event
	Villa Caritas	Facility Tour
	St. Michael's Health Group	Meeting
	Strathcona Place Senior Society	Event
Fort Mcleod	Welcome Seniors Centre and Fort Mcleod FCSS	Facility event
Grande Prairie	Northern Alberta Development Council and AMA	Meeting
Lamont	Lamont County Region FCSS	Conference
	Lamont County Region Seniors Action Group	Meeting
	Lamont Adult Learning Council and Lamont County Region Community Support Services	Event
Lethbridge	Park Meadows	Facility Tour
	Legacy Lodge	Facility Tour
	Hardie Manor	Facility Tour
	Lethbridge Alberta Transit	Meeting
	Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre	Mini Conference
Lomond	Lomond Senior Citizens	Seniors Services Information session
Nanton	Quality of Life Foundation	Event
Medicine Hat	Veiner Seniors Centre	Facility Tour
	Southview Manor	Facility Tour
	South Ridge Village	Facility Tour
	Cypress View Foundation	Facility Tour
	South Country Village	Facility Tour
	Wellington Retirement Residence	Facility Tour
Ranfurly	Ranfurly Seniors Club	Seniors Services information session
Peace River	Sutherland Place	Seniors Services Information Session
Redwater	Diamond Spring Lodge	Meeting
Red Deer	Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre	Seniors Services Information Session
Sherwood Park	Strathcona County FCSS	Conference
	Silver Birch Lodge, Clover Bar Lodge	Meeting
	Strathcona County FCSS	Meeting
Smoky Lake	Alberta Council on Aging/ Smoky Lake Seniors	Meeting – information sharing
Spruce Grove	City of Spruce Grove Transportation	Meeting

Location	Facility/ Organization	Reason for Visit
Taber	Linden View	Meeting
Two Hills	Eagle Foundation	Seniors Services Information session
Vegreville	Town of Vegreville	Focus Group
	St. Michael's Health Group	Community Awareness program
	Lions Golden Villa	Seniors Services information session
	Heritage House	Seniors Services information session
	Century Park	Seniors information session
	St. Paul Presbytery of United Church of Canada	Presentation



SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

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Alberta